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Volume II

CHAPTER 16 OUP BOOKS IN THE WORLD

ROBERT FRASER

From the Broad to Abroad

The purpose of the present chapter is to consider the various ways in which the press - gently to begin with and then with increasing assertiveness - did business overseas during the nineteenth century. It will attempt to answer such questions as 'How came it that by 1896 the delegates considered the establishing of branches to be necessary?'; 'What had proved so unsatisfactory about earlier arrangements, and of what in any case had these arrangements consisted?' There is a logic to these processes and changes that will be traced out, a logic that has to do, partly with the internal evolution of the press itself, but mostly with the ways in which – first by a series of fits and starts, then with increasing courage and imaginativeness – OUP adapted to the growing challenges of the international book trade.

A Singular Prerogative

In May 1884 Darabshah Behramji, a potential author from India, wrote to Henry Frowde to ask if he would take on a recent book of his. Frowde wrote back: 'I shall be very happy to undertake the publication of your work in England, and other countries omitting India. All the leading booksellers have accounts with me, and I have agents in the United States, Canada, Australia, on the continent of Europe etc. who would do their utmost to promote the book.'¹

There are a number of striking features about this remark. The most glaring is its deployment of the first person singular. Frowde was Publisher to the University, and had been so since 1880. When it came to the distribution of Oxford books beyond Britain, he clearly regarded himself as being in a unique position. From this vantage point he could look in two directions: inwards towards the university and outwards towards the world. In this outer capacity he was dependent as he saw it on a range of secondary or subordinate agencies, or as he preferred to call them 'export customers.' He did not deal with overseas readers or libraries direct: when it came to the relationship between overseas consumer and press, he was the essential middleman who orchestrated the transaction. The straightest answer to the question 'How did Oxford distribute its books during most of the nineteenth century?' is, therefore, 'Not at one, but at two removes'. Until the very end of this period, the press did not contemplate printing overseas, not at this time did it ever export its books

¹ Frowde to Darabshah Dastar Peshutonji Behramji, May 23 1884, Frowde Letter Books Vol. 12 f .397.

directly from Oxford. Instead it operated through intermediaries, and it might be sensible at the outset to make clear exactly who these agents were, and to establish a distinction between what I will be calling 'primary' and 'secondary' agents. The primary agent was the Publisher himself – Alexander Macmillan followed by Frowde – in whom the press vested the responsibility for marketing its books beyond the precincts of domestic academe. But the publisher in turn filtered his merchandise through a welter of secondary agencies, located either in England or in the countries of destination, who then sold the books at their own risk.

The role of the Publisher, moreover, had evolved slowly out a range of ad hoc arrangements with different firms – principally partners in the Bible trade – struck earlier in the century. It is clear that a number of these concerns had acted – amongst other things – as informal export agents. It is equally clear that the Press itself in those times wished to take little responsibility for foreign trade resulting from its publications, still less to direct it. In May of 1858 the Press's Oxford bookseller, James Parker, advised them that he was in a position to negotiate an advantageous deal with Lippincott of Philadelphia for the sale in America of 1000 copies of the Press's abridged *Greek Lexicon* at 1s 8d per copy, to which the Delegates consented provided Parker agreed to shoulder all the risks. They made one important additional stipulation: the books for sale in America, they insisted, should 'be printed on paper distinctly marked.'² This determination to keep Oxford's imprint distinct from the mass – and particularly the American – market was to prove of abiding importance in dealings with the trade for the rest of the century. In the 1850s, with some exceptions mostly with regard to Germany, the Press permitted overseas trade, rather than actively promoted it. At the beginning of 1859 Gardner offered to send Press books to North America with his own travelling salesman, and the Board accepted his terms of a 12½% commission on all books sold.³ Despite such accommodations, overseas sales were still considered incidental, even a subordinate, matter. In some instances the Press seems even to have regarded overseas markets as a convenient dumping ground for anything excess to requirements, or for productions by its agents which failed to meet with its full accord. Chapter 2 has mentioned Parker's unauthorised edition of the Gospels and Acts that year, and his consequent reproof by the Bible Committee. By April Parker had agreed to abandon plans to print copies of the plagiarised text, and offered instead to sell the plates to America or to have them melted down, as the Delegates wished.⁴ In the same meeting they recorded their relief at this outcome, and allowed him to sell the plates in the United States, territory not covered by the privilege. If something was not good enough for Britain, it would do for overseas.

By the turn of the 1860s, however, priorities had already started to change, and arrangements to be modified to suit. The Publisher could not be treated as J. H. Parker had been: if he wished to push the boat out overseas, the Press from now on was minded to encourage him. Perspectives continued to shift as, during the course of the rest of the century, the Publisher grew in influence and, at the same time, drew closer to the university. Frowde's predecessor Macmillan – without Greek and besmirched by association with the London trade – had begun almost as a law unto himself; he was in any case inconveniently stretched between Oxford's commercial interests and those of his own firm. While Frowde had the ear of the delegates, he too was a non-graduate whose business instincts were trusted more than his

² Delegates Order Book, May 21 1858.

³ Ibid, February 28 1859

⁴ Ibid, April 3 1857

overall cultural judgement. A double first and a blue, The man who took over from Frowde in the early twentieth century, Humphrey Milford, was a double first and a blue and could in contrast confidently be viewed from the very outset as an Oxford man doing Oxford's business, albeit in the vicinity of St Paul's.

Until the existence of branches, the Publisher and his agents entirely orchestrated export trade. Across the period, however, these elements in the mix were shaken and sometimes stirred. Macmillan and Co, which in 1863 had been the primary agent, had moved by the 1880s to occupying a position of being a secondary agent at Frowde's beck and call. What in summary occurred over the closing decades of the century was an outward movement whereby the Publisher acted progressively to oust his external agents, and to supplant them with Oxford's own appointees. Thereafter the branches – the logical next step - were to become, in effect, Oxford's presence in the world.

Another strongly instrumental factor in the Press's change of attitude was the vigorous expansion of international involvement by the English and Scottish book trade in general, including Oxford's direct competitors. Such expansion proceeded apace from the early 1860s onwards, and it involved a larger number of British companies than has commonly been recognised: 'Besides Routledge, Nelson and Strahan, John Cassell was also established in New York and had opened an agency there in 1860. By the 1880s, Cassell's New York branch was independent of the British parent company and represented "T. Fisher Unwin, Heinemann and Chatto and Windus" In May 1884 Cassell also opened a branch in Melbourne, and two months later Ward and Lock sent out a "resident representative" in Australia. Two years previously Ward and Locke had opened a New York branch.'⁵ It is clear that by the mid-1880s British publishers used a variety of methods of reaching overseas customers. Loth to get its feet wet in the first instance, the Press could not but recognize the medium to long term advantages of plunging in. The lowest level of participation consisted in the use of commercial travellers, often shared with other firms. A middle road was to operate through agents, often booksellers, some of whom were located in London whilst others operated from Calcutta, Paris or Melbourne. The highest level of participation of all, and the highest level of risk, involved the opening of overseas branches of the parent firm.

Oxford was usually reluctant to employ travellers, since they offered little control over the process. As century wore on, it therefore gravitated from the second approach towards the third. In Frowde's day the Press was still committed to the unsatisfactory compromise of the second method: that is, of acting through a welter of secondary agencies. As to exactly who these agencies were, Frowde himself enables us to be quite specific. On the first day of March 1884 Bartholemew Price asked him to supply a complete list of those on whom he had relied to sell the press's learned books abroad during the previous financial year, with a breakdown of each's share⁶. The detailed inventory Frowde provided in response has much to tell us about the press's exports at this particular time, and the change in attitude from mid-century⁷:

⁵ Alison Rukavina, *The Development of the International Book Trade, 1870-1895, Tangled Networks* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 102, quoting James West, 'Book-Publishing 1835-1900: The Anglo-American Connection'. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 84. No. 4 (1990), p. 369.

⁶ Frowde to Price, March 1, 1884. Frowde Letter Books, Vol. 12, ff. 207-8.

⁷ Frowde to Price, March 1, 1884, Enclosure. Frowde Letter Books, Vol .12. ff. 209-210.

[Robert, we need to make clear what these monies represented: are they money generated by sales?]

		Amount for Year ending June 30 th 1883		
		£	s	d
Allen, W. H. & Co.	(for continent of Europe & Calcutta)	45	12	8
Brockhaus, J. A.	Leipzig	28	17	11
Gladding J.	(for M. Grassent of Paris)	9	10	8
Galignani Library, The	Paris	3	5	5
Hoepli, U.	Milan	11	9	11
Jeeta Heelis & Co.	(for Germany)	6	7	5
Kirbergen, W. H.	Amsterdam	32	7	2
Kramers, H. A. & Son	Rotterdam	29	2	1
Klincksieck, C.	Paris	21	9	7
Koller, A.	Rotterdam		4	10
Low, Sampson & Co.	(General Exporters)	147	6	11
Macmillan & Co.	Bedford St	69	19	3
Robbens, J. G.	Rotterdam	10	11	3
Richardson & Co.	(for continent of Europe & Madras)	23	9	3
Samson & Wallin	Stockholm	19	11	5
Trübner & Co.	Ludgate Hill	244	13	3
Turelmeyer, A.	Leipzig	23	15	6
Almaraman Sagoon & Co.	Bombay	152	2	9
Bhicoo Sazba & Co.	Bombay	161	15	4
Baker, J. P. H.	(for India)	30	19	5
Banerjee, B. & Co.	Calcutta	25	17	8
Cave, H. W. & A. W.	Colombo	6	13	11

Ghosh, D. N. & Co.	Calcutta	21	1	9
Gopal, Narayan & Co.	Bombay	21	1	7
King, H. J. & Co.	(for India)	54	3	6
Kelly & Walsh	Shanghai	2	16	3
Lyon. J. & Co.	Calcutta	65	11	7
Thacker W. & Co.	Calcutta & Bombay	197	9	7
Copland, J. P.	(for Ontario, New Zealand)	26	2	9
Edwards Dunlop & Co.	Sydney	26	2	9
Holworthy, J. M. & Co.	Melbourne & Sydney	22	5	11
Mullen, S.	Melbourne	98	1	9
Robertson G. & Co. Limited	Melbourne	334	11	2
Rigby, W. O.	Adelaide	31	2	10
Wigg E. & Son	Adelaide	10	7	11
Whitcombe & Tombs	Christchurch	26	14	11
Campbell, J. & Son	Toronto	20	9	2
Copp Clark & Co.	Toronto	5	1	4
Carswell, R.	Toronto	24	6	4
Dawson W. & Sons	(for Canada & New Zealand)	23	9	6
Dawson Bros	Montreal	2	8	10
Gage W. J. & Co.	Toronto	22	5	9
Stevens, B. J.	(for American Libraries)	80	1	6
Darter Bros & Walton	Cape Town	40	4	1
Davis, P. & Son	Maritzburg	3	12	3
Juta, J.C.	Cape Town	98	11	5

The spread here is instructive and, for the latter part of our period at least, fairly characteristic of Oxford's international reach. First there were home-located agencies or 'customers' who sold all over the world. By 1883 it is interesting to see Macmillans themselves listed amongst these, with a reasonable but far from overwhelming share of the trade. They were however surpassed by both Trubners with a share four times, and Sampson and Low with a share twice, as large. Then there were agencies located overseas responsible for distribution over a wide surrounding geographical area. Thacker and Spink, for example, were prominently placed in the Indian trade, and in addition to their offices in Calcutta and Bombay they also maintained a headquarters in London⁸. Like Trubners and Macmillans they were also publishers in their own right. In terms of annual turnover, this expatriate firm was closely followed by two Bombay booksellers under indigenous management: Almaran and Sagoon and Bhico Sanzha. B.J. Stevens evidently covered much of the American market, and Robertson of Melbourne much of Australia.

Thirdly there were smaller concerns that supplied more confined, by and large national, clusters of consumers. Three c's - Campbells, Copp Clark and Carswell - had scooped up much of the Canadian trade, and Darker and Watson and J.C. Juta shared the South African. Brockhaus and Turelmeyer covered Germany between then, whilst Hoepli serviced Italy, and The Galignani Library supplied France.

A note of caution, however, has to be sounded. Bibles seem to have been excluded from this particular breakdown, as do schoolbooks, and both the volume of trade and the geographical spread are impressively wider than they would have been earlier in the century. The modes of operation however seem to be fairly typical for the period as a whole: a mixture of London firms, regional cartels and neighbourhood booksellers. The following questions thus arise: how had this impressive network of intermediaries and miscellaneous contacts been built up over time, and why was Oxford ultimately to experience a need to disturb it? To address the first of these queries, we must go back to the beginning of the century and commence where Oxford's overseas traffic itself began: with sales of the Bible.

An Army on the March

Oxford Bibles had almost certainly found their way overseas since they started to be printed, but in the luggage of individual travellers, whether acquired as single copies for private devotion, or in bulk for churches or schools. By 1799, however, Oxford was already producing editions of Holy Writ specifically for the use of the oldest established of the missionary societies, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge⁹. The full professionalization of this process began intensively with the evangelical revival of the early decades of the nineteenth century, a development much aided by the almost contemporaneous arrival of stereotype and

⁸ For a succinct summary of Thacker and Spink's Calcutta and London businesses, see Victoria Condie, 'Thacker, Spink and Company: Bookselling and Publishing in Nineteenth-Century Calcutta', in Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond eds. *Books Without Borders* (Palgrave, 2008), *Volume 2; Perspectives from South Asia*, 112-124.

⁹ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth Century Publishing And the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 12.

lithographic printing. The introduction of the first of these new technologies by the Cambridge University Press in February 1804 initially caused some concern in Oxford. In May of the following year the Delegates approved an investment in the new technique, and by 1808 they were negotiating with the SPCK over the printing of Welsh bibles by stereographic plates, agreeing that no more should be charged for such books than for those produced by 'the common Mode of printing'.¹⁰ From 1810 onwards the Delegates approved the use with discretion of the still relatively new technique of lithography to increase the attractiveness of Oxford Bibles in an expanding market, both at home and overseas. A further unwelcome source of competition for both university presses, and a stimulus to further effort, was an influx of Bibles and Prayer Books from Scotland¹¹. The admonition of Psalm Nineteen, Verse Four – 'Their sound is gone out into all lands: and their words to the end of the world' – were now being taken with solemn literalness by founders of newly founded missionary societies reflecting every shade of Protestant opinion from the austere dutifulness of the Baptist Missionary Society to the ritualism of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel [David McK suggests that the ASPG became more ritualistic rather later on]. In 1844 Pope Gregory XVI was regretfully to note that bible societies 'were first established in England and have spread far and wide so that we now see them as an army on the march, conspiring to publish in great numbers copies of the books of divine Scripture'.

By far the most successful regiment in this army, in scale and reach, was the Anglican (though ecumenically-minded) British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804 (the very year stereotype made its presence felt in a major bible press) with the express purpose of distributing Holy Writ as widely inexpensively as possible, at home and overseas. Known universally as 'The Bible Society', it first approached the press in March 1810 with a request for 10,000 copies of the Nonpareil 24mo Bible, specially to be printed for them by Dawson and Bensley with the Delegates' express permission to add 'below the usual imprint the Words 'printed for the British and Foreign Bible Society'¹² The resistance of the Roman church served as a further spur to the Society's activity, since it thenceforth regarded itself as possessing a special responsibility to convey the scriptures in European languages across Catholic Europe. The Society so organised its finances that proceeds from the domestic sale of Bibles financed the publication of Bibles for distribution abroad¹³. The BFBS plied its wares in every continent: within a century it was to sell or distribute worldwide some seventy-five million copies.

In Britain itself the general aim of all of these proselytising organizations, much abetted by the rise in literacy during the century, was to ensure the presence of holy writ in every home; overseas it was to translate the scriptures into hundreds of vernaculars that so far possessed no translation. The mode of transmission varied, though the Bible Society favoured a colportage system of travelling representatives or 'reps' like George Borrow. Whatever their doctrinal complexion or methods, however, all such organizations were - as far as English was concerned - dependent until 1881 on the King James version of 1611, the prerogative for printing which without notes was confined to the university presses of Oxford and Cambridge and the Queen's Printer. When in the 1870s the committee responsible for preparing the

¹⁰ Delegates Order Book for 19 March 1808, f.249.

¹¹ For Scottish competition, see particularly Delegates Order Book for October 27, 1815 (f.56) and July 5, 1816 (f.66)

¹² Delegates Order Book for 2 March 1810, f.289.

¹³ Howsam, 35.

Revised Version started work, they were approached by the university presses who agreed to subsidize the project in exchange for an exclusive right to publish¹⁴. Under this arrangement the Revised New Testament appeared to international éclat in 1881, and the Old four years later.

There had been an impressive growth in Oxford's Bible sales during the middle decades of the century, amounting to a three-fold increase between 1831 and 1881.¹⁵ It is clear that a high proportion of these books found their way overseas, either by trade with continental and colonial booksellers or more usually through the Missionary Societies. In the years 1837-47, the Bible Society alone took 53.6% of the 2,612,730 bibles produced by the Press; by 1865 the proportion had reached two-thirds.¹⁶ Over the same period the proportion of the Society's books going overseas increased eightfold from two to sixteen per cent ¹⁷The growth continued up to the end of our period; in June 1894 Frowde calculated that the Society's Estimated Annual Order was "£888.14.2 in excess of last year".¹⁸

It is important, however, not exaggerate this mutual dependence. The law gave the *cum privilegio* publishers no advantage when it came to translations other than into English or Welsh. The prime overseas destinations of Oxford bibles purchased or commissioned by the Bible Society were thus English-speaking colonies such as Australia and New Zealand **and South Africa?**, which were also important markets for hymnbooks. Oxford also occasionally supplied bibles in European languages: in 1872 they printed J.F. Ostervald's translation of *La Sainte Bible* for the Bible Society, and three years later a revision of it for the SPCK. They also printed the Gospels in German¹⁹. When it came to translations into non-European vernaculars, however, Oxford hardly featured on the wider scene. Indeed all the evidence suggests that the societies, resentful of the stranglehold exercised over English, tended to look elsewhere for such purposes. The understandable tendency of the Bible Society, for example, was to print *in situ*; Danish translations in Copenhagen or Stavanger, Hungarian in Budapest; Chinese in Shanghai. The Spanish translation of *The New Testament* that Borrow was so energetically pushing in Iberia in the 1840s was printed for him in Madrid. A consultation of Darlow and Moule's 1903-11 centenary compendium of editions and translations of bibles held in the Society's library is illuminating in this regard. In volume one covering Bibles in the English tongue, the Press makes an appearance on nearly every page: in the later volumes covering its worldwide distribution via a myriad of vernaculars, it is almost absent. A rare exception is the Malagasy New Testament for which, as Frowde informed Price in 1883, an order of 50,000 had just been received.

America was a case apart. Here the missionary societies, with the exception of the SPCK, regarded themselves as possessing no special remit; for obvious reasons, however, demand was strong. Nor did resistance to British cultural authority where it occurred entail any corresponding suspicion of the Authorised Version of the scriptures. When, in the opening year of the War of Independence, Nathan Hale, the country's first paid-up spy and martyr for

¹⁴ *The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ Translated out of the Greek. Being the Version Set Forth AD 1611 compared with the most ancient authorities and revised* (Oxford University Press, 1881), p.xiii.

¹⁵ See Chapter 00 (Amy Flanders).

¹⁶ Howsam, p. 118.

¹⁷ Howsam, p. 210.

¹⁸ Frowde to Gell, June 19, 1894, Frowde Letter Books, f.27, Vol 34, f. 27.

¹⁹ Darlow and Moule, vol. 3.

the national cause, was arraigned in New York and prepared for execution by hanging, two items were found about his person: his Yale graduation certificate for the Class of 1793 and a copy of the King James Bible. The cachet of such imported bibles continued for a century and more. On 4 March 1861, at the beginning of his first term office, and when the imminent civil war had delayed the arrival of his personal effects including his family Bible, Abraham Lincoln chose a Bible printed in Oxford in 1853 on which to be sworn in. On January 20, 2009, when Barack Obama's inauguration proceeded in the full glare of international publicity, the new President's right hand rested by his own wish on the Oxford Bible Lincoln had once used.²⁰ The cadences of the Authorised Version, moreover, roll across American religious and secular literature from *The Book of Mormon* (1830) to *Moby Dick* (1850). When Joseph Smith dictated his "parallel" volume" to the Christian scriptures, he claimed to be translating from certain lost "plates of Lehi", yet the resulting foundation text of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints is impure Jacobean pastiche. And when in 1875 Mary Baker Eddy first published that classic of spiritual optimism *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures*, it was overwhelmingly the King James Version that she quoted and claimed to have unlocked. The specific connection with Oxford was re-enforced after 1894 when the Press, realising that her book was boosting the sales of their own Bibles, made the then unusual concession of sending **selling? – or was it a gift?** her consignments of Oxford India paper on which to print several subsequent editions.²¹



Plate 15.1: The 'Lincoln Bible' printed in Oxford in 1853.

But if it was easy to preserve the authority of a privileged text, it was far more difficult thus far away to reserve the trade. A special challenge was presented by unauthorised publishing

²⁰ On the day prior to Obama's inauguration, CBS news carried an interview with a curator at the Library of Congress in which the "Lincoln Bible" is shown in close shot, its title page with the Press's imprimatur clearly visible. <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=4736915n&tag=related>; photovideo.

²¹ William Dana Orcott, *Mary Baker Eddy and Her Books* (Boston; Christian Science Publishing Society, 1950), pp. 64-5.

of the King James text, besides which Oxford had to compete with the legitimate products of the American Bible Society. The difficulty experienced in controlling the proliferation of unauthorised copies was vividly illustrated by the publication of the revised New Testament in 1881. This was clearly planned as major international event, with press notices being placed in French, Belgian, German, Australian and three New York newspapers. From the outset transatlantic participation was invited through the appointment of an American translation committee under the Swiss-born Protestant theologian Philip Schaff. This advised on successive drafts and where, after eighteen months of vigorous correspondence, the two committees failed to agree, the American variants were recorded in an appendix. The mood of these contributions is easy to discern, being egalitarian, academically rigorous and less attached to wordings surviving from the AV. The evangelists are stripped of their titles as Saints, and Paul of his as an Apostle. "Testament" becomes "Covenant", "palace" becomes "praetorium", and the Dickensian sounding "victuals" turn into prosaic "provisions". The Americans also insisted - quite rightly as it happens - that the Epistle to the Hebrews should no longer spuriously be attributed to the [deconsecrated - 'demoted' perhaps?] Paul²². All of these changes were incorporated into the main text of the American Standard Version of 1901. [David KcKitterick pointed out that CUP played a part in this process.]

Frowde had arranged for a special consignment to be sent [across to New York by steamship on May 9, including a quarter of a million copies of the pocket-sized 32mo cloth edition in nonpareil type²³.] On the ship's arrival, crowds at the dockside anticipated this textual revelation as eagerly as in 1840 they had awaited news of the fate of Little Nell. Within two days of disembarkation a pirated edition was on sale in the streets. The *Chicago Times* reproduced the Gospels, Acts and the Epistle to the Romans on the 22nd. Though the inadequacy of international copyright law doubtless played some part in this debacle, the unsatisfactory nature of trading from a distance was partly responsible for Frowde's decision in 1896 that the press should set up its own American branch.

An interim solution to these difficulties was to work through a single agent, Thomas Nelson and Sons of Edinburgh, who from 1881 enjoyed exclusive rights for the sale of Oxford Bibles and Prayer books throughout the United States, a function they fulfilled with varying success for fourteen fraught years. Oxford initially reposed some trust in this firm, which had started out in Scotland in the late eighteenth century as purveyors of religious literature, and which maintained a full complement of travelling reps worldwide. Initially too Nelsons were to assist with the printing of the Revised New Testament, a consignment of the brevier edition of which, intended for the American market, was to be run off by them in Edinburgh.

But from the beginning there were problems. The professional culture of Nelsons was very different from Oxford's - more egalitarian and more plainspoken - and complaints about the terms allowed by the Delegates were frequently voiced, as they were always to be in circumstances where Oxford employed another publisher as its agent. Through Frowde's early letter books it is possible to trace a rising tide of irritation with this intractable partner²⁴. Problems arose in the very first year of the agency when an insufficient demand for brevier testaments in the United States caused the press abruptly to cancel their print order with Edinburgh with effect from July 21, leaving Nelsons with a large batch of unwanted

²² Revised New Testament, pp. 595 sqq.

²³ Frowde Letter Books, Volume 5, f. 153.

²⁴ See especially Volume 10, ff. 315, 333, 416,441.

paper on their hands which they had already bought in for the purpose and, for which they were minded to claim against Oxford to the tune of £9,811. 4s. 2d. For the following two years the dispute rumbled on, with Nelsons sometimes claiming that they could find a use for the paper themselves, sometimes that they could not. By March 1883, despite a diplomatic visit by Frowde to Nelsons' Parkside works, and despite a payment made in good faith to Nelsons of £196 towards their supposed financial loss, the dispute was yet to be settled²⁵. A second dispute arose from the commercial terms of the agency itself, and in particular from the stage of each transaction at which Nelsons was supposed to pay the press for books received, or indeed what the term "received" could be said to imply. Later in 1883, Frowde was complaining that of 400,000 nonpareil 32mo testaments ordered by Nelsons, 290,934 had been delivered to Edinburgh, whilst a mere 61,351 had cleared the New York customs house; in the meantime Nelsons had only paid for 229, 583. It was much the same story with the less popular brevier edition, 117, 000 of which had been ordered, 123,239 dispatched (the excess of 117,000 being an error), a mere 48,683 having passed the customs house, and 74,556 paid for.

The ill feeling between these two great publishing enterprises [David McKitterick naturally asks for CUP to be included in this and refers to his work on CUP] continued at a subdued pitch, with occasional flashes of temper on both sides, for a further eleven years. A tetchy letter from Frowde to Nelson's American manager in February 1894 conveys something of the recurrent mood. A consignment of bibles that has reached New York is being placed 'on this side of the American custom house, but within Nelson's reach if they should require them', the purpose being to ensure Nelsons pay the freight²⁶. Very late in the day, in 1895, Nelsons' request for more favourable terms for their troubled agency was abruptly turned down. Scrutiny of the Bible files in the Nelsons archive in Edinburgh confirms that the a legacy of bad blood between the two firms persisted at least as late as 1911, long after the agency as such had ceased, with tetchy complaints being made at the Nelsons end as to 'the fierce competition and grasping over every line worth having' that had been 'the long existing policy of the Oxford Press.'²⁷ When references to Oxford occur in Nelsons' ledgers in the new century, it is to the freshly founded New York branch acting as agents for Nelsons' own books²⁸

The Empire of Learning

To a certain extent the history of the sales of the press's learned books overseas ran parallel with its experience on the Bible side, illustrating analogous tensions and dilemmas: over control of the trade, for example, or over copyright. Right from the beginning, however, there were important differences. Learned books represented a thinner slice of the cake – 7.78% of the press's total output in 1890 as compared with 19.34 % - and they were also less lucrative, with an overall profit margin of 10.98% as opposed to 25.82%.²⁹ But what they lacked in profitability they more than made up for in prestige. The reputation and self-esteem, both of individual authors and of the press collectively, depended on them. Besides, although the

²⁵ Frowde to Price, 2 March 1883. Frowde Letter Book Volume 10, f.315.

²⁶ Frowde to Nelsons, August 10, 1894, Letter Books Volume 34, f. 142.

²⁷ Allen to Brown 22 November, 1911, Nelson Archive, Edinburgh University Library Gen.1728.37.466

²⁸ In 1907, for example, OUP New York took \$141. 19s. 9d. worth of items on Nelsons list. Export Ledger 1907-9, Nelson Archive, Edinburgh University Library Gen.1728.3.17

²⁹ Consolidated accounts for 1890. |

Bible still provided much of the press's bread-and-butter, the Delegates had frequently been connected to the Learned Side in their capacity as authors or editors, and during the second half of the century this fact alone gave them a vested interest in sales. On the bible side the tensions that arose were normally between the Publisher and his agents. On the learned side these were often complicated by additional conflicts between the Publisher located in London and the Secretary with his remit to represent the Delegates and the overall will of the press in Oxford. The thrust in exports suggested by Frowde's list of 1883 was a reflection partly of the increased speed of international communication and partly, as Rukavini's survey suggests, of the expansive dynamics of the book trade in general. But the shape that his thrust assumed in Oxford's case also came to reflect the personalities - and the interpersonal relationships - of successive Publishers and Secretaries as they came and went, in sickness or in health.

As Frowde's inventory has already shown us, by the fourth quarter of the century Oxford books were reaching [most – 'many'? Not much of a presence in Africa, S. America or much of Asia] parts of the globe, and learned titles were bought wherever there were students, teachers and colleges to acquire them. Prior to this period, however, not all of these regions were held in equal esteem in Oxford. In the middle years of the century it is clear that one or two markets were regarded more favourably than others: namely - especially in the earlier part of the period – Germany and – with increasing insistence as the century wore on – the United States.

By the turn of the nineteenth century Germany, and to a lesser extent Holland [though Holland had been a principal publisher of classics in earlier centuries], were seen as Meccas of classical scholarship, and no effort was spared to cultivate German institutions, to sign up German classicists as authors, or to place monographs on German shelves.³⁰ Links with German and Dutch institutions were already well advanced by 1830, thanks largely to the persistence of the indefatigable Thomas Gaisford responsible, in his double capacity as Professor of Greek and long time Delegate to the Press, for securing several key works from German scholars: the later volumes of the Daniel Wytttenbach's Plutarch (with which Gaisford himself assisted after a fire in Wytttenbach's library)³¹; the Plotinus of F. Creuzer and G. H. Moser (1835), and a reprint of Immanuel Bekker's Aristotle (1837). It was Gaisford's initiative too that the Press had to thank for signing up the magisterial Wilhelm Dindorf to edit Homer, the scholia on the Odyssey, the Venice scholia on the Iliad, the Greek dramatists and in 1851, four years before Gaisford's death, a much-praised annotated Demosthenes. Gaisford was a dour man, but his achievement was a remarkable instance of what nowadays would be called networking. Nor did he let the crossover between his various roles – as Dean, scholar, delegate and friend – inhibit him. The relationships he fostered were professional and privately warm; soon Dindorf felt comfortable enough to write personally to the Delegates in German, his letters being respectfully read out at their meetings, then transcribed into the Orders. Gaisford's attitude to the German market was both entrepreneurial and pro-active, though not without the occasional conflict of interest. When advantageous, he was even prepared within a couple of years to re-issue an Oxford text of his own - such as the Stobaeus he edited for the press in 1822 - under a distinct continental imprint – in this case 'Lipsiae in bibliopolio Kuehniano' - so as to ensure its presence in German academic circles.

³⁰ See Chapter 00.

³¹ For the Press in relation to Wytttenbach's Plutarch, see Delegates Orders for Meeting of December 13, 1816, with Gaisford naturally attending.

Bartholomew Price too had enjoyed something of the same freedom and versatility. With the proliferation of the Press's activities, and the diversification of its markets, however, such individual freedom of action became, as the century advanced, more and more restricted. What in the 1830s could safely be left to the energy and curiosity of well-placed dons came to seem by mid-century a field for appropriate central organization. This is true of no aspect of the press's work so much as its relations with overseas, which were from the 1860s on increasingly conducted from London. As we have already seen at mid-century, both Parker and Gardiner had made half-hearted attempts, with the grudging blessing of the Delegates, to sell books in America; there is some additional evidence that Parkers had then acted as intermediaries with Paris booksellers³². From 1863 onwards, however, Oxford's external relations with the wider world were steered by - indeed almost inseparable from - the complicated, precarious, and resourcefully adaptive role of the Publisher.

At the beginning the arrangements made with Alexander Macmillan seem to have been fairly informal, his role being perceived partly as one of promotion and partly to advise on the parity between the Press's arrangements with individual authors and those pertaining in the wider world of publishing. It is therefore unsurprising to find him being consulted from the very start on questions such as to what sort of books should be published, how authors should be paid, and pricing. During the last meeting of the summer term of 1863, the Delegates agreed to collaborate with him in the issue of educational works on an *ad hoc* basis, and to loan him the cost of 'building a house [in London] for the transaction of his business as in the opinion of Messrs Wegg, Son and Oliver they could be justified in lending, having regard to the value and security of the property and the duration of the lease, making provision accordingly for the repayment of the money lent.'³³. A letter to Macmillan from Price in his capacity as Secretary to the Delegates dated October 3rd makes his associated responsibilities perfectly clear, with an indication that overseas - and America especially - might be considered the next field of concerted expansion³⁴.

Macmillan himself was already strongly disposed towards America as a result of his strong advocacy of the Union cause during the Civil War then raging, and his liberal indignation against the pro-Confederacy line adopted by much of the British press, about which he was already energetically corresponding with the editor of *Atlantic Monthly*³⁵. In 1867, after the end of the war, he paid a visit to the United States, where he grew concerned about problems connected with the securing of copyright, and increasingly convinced that the opening of an office for his firm in New York was the fittest way to meet these challenges. Interestingly, when in the following year Henry Latham, who had recently fallen out with his former employers in Oxford, made a tour of the States touting for business on his own behalf, it was Macmillan who published his journal of the trip³⁶. In any case, enthusiasm among the Delegates for an outlet for Oxford's learned works across the Atlantic was now running quite high during their meetings during term in the Clarendon Building. The collective finances of

³² On 8 October 1863, for example, Alexander Macmillan, soon after assuming the role of Publisher to the press, is writing to James Parker concerning stock lodged in Paris that he now requires to be sent to Monsieur B. Desprat at 7, Rue Fontanes. BL Add Ms. 55381.

³³ See Delegates Order Book for 29 June, 1863.

³⁴ BL Add. Ms. 54886. f.1.

³⁵ Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan (1843-1943)* (London: Macmillan, 1944), 63-4.

³⁶ Henry Latham, *Black and White: A Journal of Three Months' Tour of the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1867).

the Press were poised to benefit from this move, and individual delegates stood to gain directly: after all Liddell and Scott, whose *Lexicon* had a growing reputation overseas, were both Delegates. Two years later, the terms of Macmillan's American agency were set on a firm footing by a Memorandum of Agreement 'between the Delegates of the Clarendon Press on the one part, and Alexander Macmillan, Publisher of 16, Bedford Street, London of the other part'. Co- signed by Macmillan and by the Vice-Chancellor Francis Knyvett Leighton, it commenced: "The Delegates of the Clarendon Press agree to supply the said Alexander Macmillan the books named in the schedule attached to the Agreement, and at the prices fixed therein for sale in America"³⁷.

By this agreement Macmillan undertook to provide the Secretary annually with an order-note of the titles 'supplied to him either from the Delegates' warehouse in Oxford, or from the stock held by him on sale in London or elsewhere'. 'And', the text continues, 'the said Alexander Macmillan hereby undertakes that the books supplied under the Agreement shall be sold by him or his authorised agent in America and nowhere else.' He was to account for sales up to June 13th each year within three months, and to pay over the proceeds by the first day of the following year, subtracting ten per cent as his commission.

The move was a bold one, and needs to be set in context. American universities had, after all, been taking Oxford's books on a selective basis for many decades. An inventory of titles acquired by Yale University between 1800 and 1890 gives some indication of the range and taste³⁸. Of the 296 works listed, fully a third are sermons, an inevitable proportion for a college with so distinguished a School of Divinity. Theology is the principal discipline represented, followed a long way behind by classics, with a trickle of works on other subjects. The published texts of the eight lectures delivered annually since 1780 under the will of John Bampton aroused much interest: until at least the 1830s they enjoyed a certain reputation for stoking up theological controversy, and they were keenly followed in America. Standard textbooks also occur: Price's *Differential Calculus* and Greek and Latin lectionaries also feature, as does the dictionary of Sanskrit compiled by the Christian (and devoutly evangelical) Oxford Orientalist, Monier Monier-Williams.

But the choice for the most part is unimaginative, and hardly reflects Oxford's spread of expertise. Little wonder under these circumstances that the Press felt a need to spread its wings. It had, however, to move carefully since this was already a fairly crowded field, and had been so for some time. Sidney F and Elizabeth Stege Hunter's survey of the book trade in Manhattan from 1821-42 lists 1,341 printers already active in New York during these relatively early decades³⁹. Some of these admittedly were of short duration, but the majority were not. Of the 575 licensed booksellers, some evidently specialised: Gold and Banks on the corner of Nassau and Sprick Streets in law books; Phelps and Ensign of 7 1/2 the Bowery in Maps. There were fewer publishing houses: 174 in all, and many of these did not cover academic books. Already, however, they included Putnams as well as Harpers, who had been issuing intellectually demanding titles since in 1817 James and John Harper had established

³⁷ BL Add Ms..54886, ff. 42-3.

³⁸ I am indebted to Lisa Conathan, Archivist for the Slavic Language Collection at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale, for compiling this particular list.

³⁹ Sidney F. and Elizabeth Stege Hunter, *A Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers and Bookbinders, Printers and Publishers in New York City 1821-42* (New York: The Bibliographical Society of America, 1993).

their business on the corner of Front and Dover Streets, and published an edition of that classic Enlightenment text, Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*, within a year⁴⁰.

[DM suggests that we ought to look at *The Publishers' Trade List Annual* to get a sense of what was occurring around the mid-1890s.]

Macmillan had looked into the American trade, and the first of his annual accounts bespeaks shrewdness and caution. He lists school books and scholarly titles separately, and raises the question as to whether works delivered in sheets are covered by the agreement as well as those bound in cloth, a matter of which the Memorandum had made no mention. 64 scholarly titles are recorded, but the orders in each case are for a quite modest number of copies. He orders one copy of the Dindorf Aeschylus (priced at three shillings); one of the Bekker Aristotle (price one pound and ten pence); two of Bacon's *Novum Organum* at five shillings seven and a halfpence each, and four of Bede's *History of the English Church and People* at six shillings. He asks for five of Monier-Williams' Sanskrit dictionary, and an equal number of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, a text of which Oxford was rather proud. A slightly higher order - since this is fourteen years before the start of the Nelsons agency - is for nine copies of the 1611 Bible, priced at twelve shillings. The largest and by far the most lucrative single request, unsurprisingly, is for Thorold Rogers' recent two-volume edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*: 38 copies at 12/9d a piece, yielding £24. 4s. 6d, about a seventh of the annual aggregate for academic books. The total for the sale of all these learned works stands at £178. 13s. 4d⁴¹.

On this slender basis, and on the prospect of drumming up interest in his own books, Macmillan had decided to set up shop in America. He had sent out the forty-year-old George Edward Brett to assume control, and instructed worthy, one-legged George Lillie Craik [There seem to be two George Lillie Craiks; the elder (his father?) spanned 1798-1866; the Macmillan Craik died in 1905 – could give his dates to distinguish him?] in the Bedford Street office in London to liaise with him. An unprepossessing brownstone in what is now Greenwich Village thus became the first base for the sale of Oxford books in the United States. There in August 1869 Brett set up his office at 63, Bleecker Street, renaming it 'Clayton House'. By July 1870 he had printed off his first official letter head as 'Macmillan and Co, Publishers to the University of Oxford'. But this was unknown territory to Brett both geographically and professionally, and he was only slowly acclimatized to the technicalities of the import business. It was three years since the laying of the first transatlantic cable, and the steamship crossing now took an average of ten days, weather permitting. Insurance was of the essence: for the first shipment, by the steamship *Calabria* in early March 1870, a Dr Appleton was called in as the Merchant Appraiser, and by the 30th of the month the books were still standing in the docks awaiting payment of customs duty.⁴² Despite these embarrassments and frustrations, Brett was upbeat, pointing to the promise of the schoolbook trade. On April 13, 1870 he exuded to Craik:

⁴⁰ Joseph Blumenthal, *The Printed Book in America* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1977), p. 26.

⁴¹ BL Add Ms. 54886, ff. 46-8.

⁴² Brett to Craik, March 22, 1870, BL Add Ms. 54797 f. 36 and f.40.

There can hardly be a question of the ultimate success of this business, or of our School Books getting introduced as Class Books with the Universities and Colleges of this Country, and there is every promise that this will be the case to some extent⁴³.

Brett's sanguine attitude is easy to understand, and the reasons for it not far to seek. Schools and colleges were burgeoning all over the States and, despite the vigour of the local publishing industry, there was a gap where primary scholarly texts were concerned. The establishment of major American university presses still lay some time in the future: Chicago's in 1891, Columbia's in 1893, Yale's in 1908, Harvard's as late as 1913.

But libraries were flourishing, the classics were still much valued, and there was no lack of American authors willing to try their spurs. There was an increasingly international attitude in the world of publishing, which Macmillan and Oxford now shared. Such was the mood of confidence that the following spring Macmillan sent his seventeen-year-old nephew Frederick – the deceased Daniel Macmillan's elder son - out to New York to learn the trade. He lodged at first with Brett, who wrote back to Bedford Street reassuringly 'I hope that you feel assured that he will receive from me all the attention and regard his position entitles him to and no effort shall be wanting on my own part or my wife's part whether of short or of long duration a pleasant one'⁴⁴. In fact he stayed for five years and returned to London in 1875 broadened in outlook, and determined to turn the firm of Macmillan into a vigorous international concern whose lists of academic titles in time would come to rival, in some cases to outclass, Oxford's own, often, as in the case of textbooks and science books, taking the lead where OUP slowly and sometimes uncertainly followed. It was with Frederick, a publisher of the rising generation, rather than his still active father, that the correspondence with Oxford was thenceforth conducted.

The rise of Frederick Macmillan was good for the Macmillan family fortunes, but it was a more ambiguous sign for Oxford. Throughout the 1870s the trade of both firms with America was expanding markedly, to the joint satisfaction of all parties. In early September 1880, while on holiday in North Wales, a relaxed sounding Price was able to write instructing young Frederick to pay the previous year's profits into an account with the Press's bankers: Coutts of the Strand. At £4,000 they stood at approximately 22 times the annual profit of 1870⁴⁵. But there had been one fatal weakness in the gentleman's agreement drawn up in 1869. This had specified the terms of the Press's collaboration with Alexander Macmillan with admirable clarity, but it had left the extent and nature of it to his discretion. From the very beginning it had been left up Macmillan to decide which titles he wished to order and in what quantities, which subject areas he wished to cultivate, and what American contacts he wished to make. Worse still, no distinct demarcation had been laid down between his role as representative for Oxford and his already well established one as a publisher in his own right. True, Macmillan *père* had been hired because of his commercial expertise, but his firm had made its early reputation in the Cambridge of the 1840s with scholarly titles, and it remained a considerable and independent presence in academic publishing. Oxford and Macmillan were officially collaborators and partners, but they were also to some extent rivals in an increasingly assertive market place. Aggressive marketing did not come easily to Oxford, but it was second nature to Macmillan's son, and became so to successive generations of Bretts.

⁴³ Brett to Craik, April 13, 1870. BL Add Ms. 54797. f. 50

⁴⁴ Brett to Alexander Macmillan, May 26, 1871. BL Add. Ms. 54797 f.62.

⁴⁵ Price to Frederick Macmillan, September 6, 1880. BL Add.Ms 54886 f. 63.

By the early 1880s the implications of this state of affairs began to dawn with increasing clarity on the press, where there was a growing suspicion that Macmillans were putting their own interests above those of the Delegates. Though Brett was still keen on his connection with the Press, he necessarily now viewed it from a distance. The press constituted his accreditation, his calling card and his letterhead, but he was working in an unrestrained business environment, and he inevitably spent a lot more time with his own agents in New York such as Scribners than he did with Oxford men. Right from the outset he had been using the possessive first plural to apply to his merchandise, but when Brett said 'our books', it is Macmillans' books that he more and more frequent meant, not Oxford's.

As a result, when in February 1887 Brett sent out his son George Platt Brett on a fact-finding tour of Australia (with a planned forward forage to Japan forestalled by an outbreak of cholera in that country), the sole purpose of the visit was to scout business for Macmillan. The younger Brett made a bee-line for Melbourne where he made contact with Oxford's main agent there, George Robertson, who had also been pushing Macmillan's books. Brett was reporting back to Frederick's younger brother Maurice in London. The name Oxford hardly features in the correspondence – remarkably since, according to Frowde's list of 1883, Robertson had been shifting annually over £300 worth of Oxford's books. Trade in school texts especially, the younger Brett now complained, was uncertain and depressed, partly as a result of the vast distances involved, both within Australia and between Australia and London, and partly because of Robertson's inefficiency in supplying orders to local schools. Brett's reaction was to advise Macmillan to look to its own best advantage, ditch Robertson and set up its own agency in Sydney. Indeed, in the following year Robertson himself was in full-scale retreat, closing his moribund office in Adelaide and scaling down his offices in London. Despite the hiatus caused, Macmillan did not open their Australian agency until 1895. When they did so, it was established with no reference to Oxford, and carried no remit to distribute Oxford's books⁴⁶. The breakdown of what had been a common front in the Antipodes went some way to persuading the Press eventually to open its own Australian branch.

Brett senior's attitudes too had manifestly rubbed off readily on his onetime protégé Frederick Macmillan, who possessed besides a well-developed sense of family loyalty. After all, Frederick was not himself designated 'Publisher to the University of Oxford': the Memorandum of Agreement had been with his uncle and, though it was several times renewed, each time it was to be on slightly less favourable terms. It is no surprise that, when Alexander stepped down in 1880, the designation of Publisher passed to Frowde, a man with a rooted background in Oxford's Bible warehouse in London, with no conflicting interests to distract him, and with no personal or family axes to grind.

London-based he may have been, but Frowde's apprenticeship in the commercial arm of the Bible trade meant that he was quite used to seeing Oxford books simply as objects to be shipped. He was also just as determined to internationalise the appeal of the press as Frederick in Bedford Street for his part was resolved to turn Macmillans into a global concern. Though he himself travelled little, Frowde was furthermore both conscious of a need to build up a network of contacts worldwide, and proud of this feat when he had achieved it.

⁴⁶ Rukavina, pp. 106-110.

He went to some lengths, for example, not simply to maintain but to augment the association with Germany that had been dwindling over the past few decades. A letter of February 10, 1886 gives some indication of his methods. As his list of 1883 indicates, nearly all of the German business by this date was being conducted via the Leipzig firm of Turelmeyer. It is obvious, however, that the German connection in general had slipped some way from the high profile it had enjoyed thirty years earlier: at slightly over £23 per annum it represented a mere fraction of, say, the American, Indian or Australian markets. The Delegates with their cluster of classicists were obviously worried about this state of affairs, and had already voted at one of their meetings late in the previous year for a fresh if discreet commercial push in Germany. As matters stood, the responsibility for any such initiative and undertaking fell to Frowde. He therefore wrote to the Secretary:

In order to maintain the sale of Clarendon Press Books in Germany I think it most desirable we should place a set of them on Sale in Leipzig. I understand that the Delegates agree to this being done some months ago. After very careful inquiry I have satisfied myself that Mr A. Turelmeyer of Leipzig would be the best bookseller to entrust with such a set and I shall be most obliged if you will mark a catalogue to show what books you consider suitable for Exhibition in Leipzig and authorise me to send them. Mr Turelmeyer has expressed his willingness to exhibit them in a conspicuous place in his shop and to label them Publications of the Oxford University Press, to give a receipt for them, undertaking to return them, or any of them on demand or to say the usual export price for them⁴⁷.

In other words select Clarendon Press books were to be sent out to Germany on what nowadays would be referred to as a 'sale or return' basis. Frowde was quite used to this system, which been conventional in the Bible warehouse since at least the late 1870s. An inventory for shipments of the Revised New Testament to New York in 1881 has a distinct column for returns⁴⁸.

The directness of these methods, their assertiveness, the insistence on clear labelling and on advertising, all mark a clear break with the fairly relaxed and latterly rather half-hearted way in which Macmillan had promoted Oxford's interests. Despite this, the appointment of Frowde did not, confusingly for everybody concerned, mark an end to the Macmillan agency for selling the delegates' books in America. With little more than sentiment to support it, that agreement staggered on, with increasing misunderstanding on both sides, for a further fifteen years. The consequences of this diminishing association, and the future its failure spelled out for the press, will be dealt with towards the end of this chapter. We should first deal with a field of commercial activity with which Frowde was increasingly concerned in his early years as the Publisher, and one that would lay a path for enterprising intervention long after his time. We must turn to the special case of India.

⁴⁷ Frowde to Gell, February 10, 1886. Frowde letter books, vol. 15, f. 152.

⁴⁸ Frowde letter book 10, f.153.

The Jewel in the Crown

The Indian sub-continent, with its vast land mass, variegated populations, myriad language groups and ambitious educational sector, had long seemed an appealing theatre of activity for any enterprising British publishing house, more especially an academic one. It was, however, no more a *tabula rasa* or virgin terrain for the book trade than was the very different environment of the United States. Until the Sepoy Rising of 1857/8 much of its scholarly publishing was conducted in Calcutta through the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and increasingly too by the indigenous enterprises that were soon burgeoning in places such as the Upper Provinces – more particularly Lucknow – and in Tranquebar in the South. Since the 1820s the new technique of lithography had proved to be of much use, specifically in the light of the exceptionally cursive nature of so many Indian scripts⁴⁹. To some extent, what stereotyping had done for metropolitan publishing – enabling increasing quantities of a given text to be produced at diminished cost – was achieved in India through litho. It energised the scene, and made it quite awkward for foreign competitors to catch up.

Already, however, there existed a conduit to Oxford through Orientalist scholarship. The jurist Sir William Jones who in 1786 first inferred a common ancestor for Sanskrit and Greek, and Nathaniel Brassey Halhed who thirteen years later with local help compiled the first ever Bangla grammar, had both been graduates of Oxford, where each had benefited from the university's traditions of classical and Persian learning. If you climb up to the dusty upper chamber of the Asiatic Society's building on Calcutta's Park Street, where its manuscripts are kept, you may be shown a folio ledger with Sanskrit words and their English glosses entered meticulously into the outer, and addenda into the inner, columns of each page. These are the preliminary notes kept by Horace Hayman Wilson, then a metallurgist with the British East India Company, for his Sanskrit-English Dictionary of 1819⁵⁰. In 1832 Wilson was appointed the first incumbent of the new Boden Chair in Sanskrit at Oxford, to be succeeded by the piously inclined Monier Monier-Williams in 1860. Monier-Williams had already published his own *Sanskrit Grammar*, thenceforth much used in university departments of Orientals, with the Press in 1847. Two years later it was followed by Friedrich Max Müller's editio princeps of the *Rig Veda*.

To later generations Müller came to epitomise Oxford Orientalist scholarship but he was more in the nature of an exception that proved the rule. Trained in the North German school of philological scholarship, he was infinitely industrious, was never to set foot in India, and possessed an in some eyes incongruously Christian moral and theological agenda (not for nothing was he brother-in-law to the novelist, Hampshire rector and Muscular Christian, Charles Kingsley). Müller had been attracted to Oxford less for its linguistic accomplishments (which, as we have already seen, were far from inconsiderable), than for the fact that the Press already possessed a set of types in Devanagari (the script for both Sanskrit and written Hindi), and a compositor who, though ignorant of that script, was capable not merely of setting it, but of checking the results, so used had he become to the manual movements required for placing each character⁵¹. In 1860 Müller had been an unsuccessful candidate for

⁴⁹ For a discussion of this, see Robert Fraser, *Book History Through Postcolonial Eyes: Re-writing the Script* (Routledge, 2008), 111-13.

⁵⁰ RASB. MSE – 30 (1). A first edition of the Dictionary itself is at MSE – 30 (2).

⁵¹ Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of Friedrich Max Müller* [1974] (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1996), p.135.

the Boden Chair (too Christian for India, though for Oxford not quite Christian enough). He promptly threw himself into a couple of linked roles, as Delegate to the Press from 1870, and from 1876 as Editor of the ambitious multi-volume *Sacred Books of the East*. His original prospectus, written at Frowde's bidding, fills four India paper pages and gives some indication of the linguistic and religious scope. With an eye to his possible supporters in Church and State, it both accentuates the sanctity of this exotic literature and stresses the idea that, unlike the pagan creeds of the Greeks or the primitive Germans, the faiths of the Near East, of India and the far orient, are in effect religions of the book:

Leaving out of consideration the Jewish and Christian scriptures, it appears that the only great and original religions which profess to be founded on Sacred Books, and have preserved them in manuscript, are:-

1. The religion of the Brahmans.
2. The religion of the followers of Buddha.
3. The religion of the followers of Zarathustra.
4. The religion of the followers of Kung-fu-tze.
5. The religion of the followers of Lao-tze
6. The religion of the followers of Mohammed.⁵²

Of course evangelical churchmen would always grumble; the proposal to include the *Qu'ran* was later dropped. The irreproachably Evangelical Monier-Williams, who owed his chair to the support of the Low Church clergy and who was very wary of Müller in any case, was soon grouching about the prospect of "every library teeming with infidel publications"⁵³. But Müller was of the Broad Church party and did not care. Using all of his famed political *nous*, and his position as an influential Delegate to the Press, he set about organizing support.

The economics of the project were unusual, and reflect the privileged position that, in post-Disraeli England, Oxford had come to enjoy, both in relation to the Crown Colony of the raj and to the native princes. Half of Müller's salary as editor was to be met by the press, the rest by the India Office, which also in effect underwrote the first twenty-four volumes, on the understanding that they would take several complete sets at a heavy discount for distribution to scholarly and princely libraries throughout India⁵⁴. But a second edition of Müller's *Rig Veda*, scheduled to run alongside the series in 1888 but not covered by this understanding, initially proved something of a debacle. It was to be funded by the Maharaja of Vizianagram, and to be prepared by Frowde, any resulting profits going to his Excellency with the subtraction of £150 per annum to enable Müller to pay for an editorial assistant. But, by

⁵² *The Sacred Books of the East, Translated with Introductions and Notes, by Various Oriental Scholars and Edited by F. Max Müller* (prospectus, Oxford, October 1899). Müller had already made much the same point in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (Longmans, 1873), 104.

⁵³ Quoted in Richard Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: the last lost cause?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1988), p. 111.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed summary of the financial arrangements underpinning the *Sacred Books*, see Rimi B. Chatterjee, *Empires of the Mind: The History of the Oxford University Press in India Under the Raj* (New Delhi: OUP, 2006) 186. The original letter from the India Office, dated 29 September 1876 is, as she says, lost.

January of the following year, a large defrayment was still outstanding from the Vizainagram royal purse, although His Excellency had forwarded £600 to Müller himself (It was not clear whether this amount stood inside or outside the agreement). An application was then made by the Press's lawyers to the Maharaja's bank for a deposit of £2,600 against the total agreed, as the printers had already commenced work on credit. In the face of Müller's outraged protestations of the Maharaja's good intentions, the Delegates pressed ahead with their case arguing that, although the Maharaja was doubtless an honourable man, some security should be obtained against financial loss, lest he should die. With sarcastic indignation Müller wrote to Gell:

I quite agree with you – it was a mere inadvertence of the Maharaja. He did not realize at the time what a Deposit meant. All he knew was that he meant to perform his part. But you see even a Maharaja has his weaknesses, and does not like to do a thing, though he is quite willing to do it. But the legal mind is above such things.⁵⁵

In the event the book proved a modest success in academic terms, though commercially the *Sacred Books of the East* proved a liability well into the following century. In 1894 the India Office provided support for Volumes 35, 36 and 49, purchasing 100 copies of each⁵⁶ Other volumes were less popular, and by 1907 Frowde was led into an uncharacteristic pun, remarking that 'the series is getting into a terribly holey [sic] state'; volume eight was almost out of print, while other less popular volumes were stockpiling. In 1908 the Press commissioned a report on its commercial future, but in 1912 it was still in the catalogue, and would remain so until 1952.⁵⁷ As late as 1962 the whole run was re-printed in India: it was thus that by 1988, when I consulted them there, a pristine set of Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* occupied a complete shelf at the University of Kuwait.

The Oxonian prominence in Indian affairs, exemplified by the financing and re-iterated survival of this prestige series, was but one sign of a delicate shift of balance within late Victorian Britain, with the university now precariously though self-consciously at its centre. From 1806 until the mid-1850s the training of officers for the Indian bureaucracy had been the responsibility of the East India Company's impressively domed and colonnaded college at Haileybury in Hertfordshire. But in 1853 both Liddell, then Headmaster of Westminster, and Jowett had written to Gladstone in his capacity as the university's MP, urging him to open up the Indian Civil Service to public examination and allow the universities – by which they seem to have meant principally Oxford – a greater participation in the training offered: 'I cannot conceive,' purred Jowett on 23 July, 'any greater boon which could be conferred on the university than a share in the Indian appointments.'⁵⁸ The new exams prominently featured Latin and Greek alongside Sanskrit, Arabic and Maths, and university graduates dominated the early pass lists. A setback occurred when in the late 1860s the age of entry was

⁵⁵ Müller to Gell, 21 January, 1889. The correspondence can be followed in OUP file headed "Sacred Books of the East", 1887-1908". The edition finally appeared, with an acknowledgement of the Maharaja's bounty on the title page, in 1890.

⁵⁶ Frowde to Gell, 29 October 1894 in file *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ From 1907-42 the accounts are at OX/PUB/13/3. After 1943 they are in the file PKT.41.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Phiroze Vasunia, 'Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service' in Judith P. Hallett and Christopher Stray eds, *British Classics Outside England: The Academy and Beyond* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 69.

lowered to 21, too early for those who wished first to graduate in Greats. But in 1875 a review of the system conducted by Lord Salisbury, who was both Secretary of State for India and Oxford's Chancellor, inaugurated a 'Probationer' system under which successful candidates then took a two-year course at the university. Jowett's response was to offer a place at Balliol to everyone who passed the exam, with the result that by 1884 half of those training for the ICS were studying at his college⁵⁹. The high noon of Oxford's influence occurred after 1892 when the Aitchison Committee again raised the age of admission to 23, augmented the marks allotted for Classics, and brought the exams into line with those sat by graduates. Within a year the percentage of Oxbridge men surged from 20 to 75%, a proportion maintained up until the Great War. Few Indian candidates, it has to be admitted, were admitted under a system that (as the Haileybury regime had not) prized a mastery of Greek above a knowledge of Sanskrit, and insisted among requirements on a practical test in horse riding.

Prominent among those urging a vital role for Oxford in Indian administration were several Delegates of the Press: Jowett and Liddell among them. Though the examinations were held in London (and not until 1922 in India itself), the Press printed the papers and most of the textbooks, just as they printed those for the new university degree course in Oriental Studies devised by Monier-Williams. More importantly perhaps, they undertook that *omnium gatherum* of Indian administration, *The Imperial Indian Gazetteer*, painstakingly compiled by the retired Indian Civil Servant, William Wilson Hunter, who lived in [Oakshott – or Oaken Holt, Cumnor?] near Oxford, from the welter of local gazetteers compiled annually in each Presidency. The work had its origins in a commission to Hunter by the Viceroy Lord Mayo in 1869 for a survey of the whole Crown Colony. Once the Press accepted it, however, elephantiasis set in: from 9 volumes in 1881 it grew to 14 in 1884-5 and thence to 25 with an atlas in 1908. Frowde groaned at the task, but the alliance between the university and the Indian service proved unstoppable. It was cemented in 1883 with the laying of the foundation stone of the Indian Institute, with its envisaged role as a finishing school for the ICS. Topped by an elephant-shaped weathervane, [it was originally planned as part of Balliol – Keith Thomas queried this – could you check?] and was situated close to the Clarendon Building at the eastern extremity of the Broad, where Jowett could keep a close eye on it from the Master's Lodge at the other end of the street. (Jowett died before the building was finished. With weathervane still intact, it currently houses the History Faculty's library.) Disdainful of Monier Williams and his works as ever, Müller remained obdurately opposed throughout: its museum, he averred, would be full of 'Buddhas and stuffed animals'⁶⁰

Jowett's ideal of the perfect Balliol product and man of Empire was to be realised in Lord Curzon, his one-time pupil, Viceroy of India from 1898-1905, and for eighteen years Oxford Chancellor. Meanwhile the literary expression of this cult of leadership was enshrined in one of the Press's successes of the 1890s. Drawing on the Carlylean cult of the hero, the 'Rulers of India' represented an important initiative in the mould of John Morley's 'English Men of Letters' Series for Macmillan. Under Hunter's editorship, it had encompassed by January 1895 lives of Akbar; Albuquerque, Aurangzib; Clive; Dupleix, Warren Hastings; Cornwallis; Haidar Ali; Wellesley; the Marquess of Hastings; Elphinstone; Monroe; Amherst; Bentinck; Auckland; Hardinge; Ranjit Singh; Dalhousie (by Hunter himself); Clyde and Strathnairn;

⁵⁹ Symonds, p. 108.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Symonds, 110.

Canning; Mayo (again by Hunter), Thomason and Lawrence⁶¹. The last of these attained fictional fame in Kipling's 1901 novel as the book prize (tree-calf; two volumes for nine rupees, eight annas) awarded to its protagonist Kim at St Xavier's in Lucknow 'for proficiency in Mathematics and map-making', both useful skills for a land-surveyor-cum-spy. Each book was bound in cloth dyed Oxford blue, colour fast and suitable for the Indian climate, despite the fact that, as Frowde wrote anxiously to A.J. Combridge of Bombay in February 1895, the unfortunate discovery had already been made that the pigment used rendered the boards liable to be 'attacked by moths'⁶². To be precise it was a 'surface cloth printed with indigo. We understand that a decoction of *quassia* [ash tree native to Surinam] [sic] chips boiled in glue protects the fabric of the cloth from cockroaches and other insects, but even then they sometimes eat the colour off the surface. We have been told by some Anglo-Indians that cheap cloth binding can be executed at much lower rates in India than in England, but our informants know nothing of the trade.' The persistence in the bazaars of every part of India of these worthy books within their mouldering deep blue covers contributed markedly to the local prestige of the press, something that proved of use when in 1912 Humphrey Milford, who was about to take over from the ailing Frowde as Publisher, sent E.V. Rieu out to Bombay to establish an Indian Branch.

Eclipse and Sunrise, 1890-1897

The death of George Edward Brett in 1890 marked a distinct shift in Oxford's relationship with the firm of Macmillan and in their partnership – no longer strictly speaking a formal agency – over sales in the States and elsewhere. He was succeeded by his son, who had in effect been in control at Clayton House since returning from his Australian expedition in 1887. Though born in England in 1859, George P. Brett had spent his formative professional years in New York, and he felt no particular loyalty to the home firm in Bedford Street, London, even less so to distant *éminences grises* presiding over the activities of Oxford University Press. A cordial mood was initially maintained, and Gell at first treated a long-lived association with muted respect, but by the closing decade of the century Macmillan of New York were looking towards an autonomous future. By now their share in the marketing of the Press's learned books locally had, as we have already seen, shrunk to less than a third, nor did George Platt Brett possess any particular leaning towards scholarly publishing. His inclination was to move towards populism and, through it, to ever increasing profits. During an eminent and enterprising career he would come to oversee an expansion of his own business from an annual turnover of \$50,000 to one of eight and a half million dollars by 1931. His most notably literary success was to be his espousal of, and commercial benefiting from, the derring-do fiction of Jack London.

The politics of transatlantic publishing had in any case swept onwards. The security of author's rights in America had long concerned the mandarins of the Press. By the time Gell took over as Secretary in 1884 these concerns had grown in urgency to the extent that they occupied a fair portion of his time and thoughts, as did the precise nature of the Press's surviving obligations towards Macmillan, and the puzzling problem of how to treat prospective American rivals. In April 1886 Frederick Macmillan requested that his firm's name appear beneath the *Dominus Illuminatio Mea* and shield on the title page of all Clarendon Press books for which his firm acted in the States. In May, Gell conceded and also

⁶¹ Frowde to Cannon, January 21, 1895. Frowde letter books, vol. 35, f.366.

⁶² Frowde to A.J. Combridge, February 19, 1895, Frowde letter books Vol. 35, f.466.

agreed to keep Bleecker Street fully informed of all forthcoming publications, and to send across dummy copies.⁶³ When the following Spring the Drummond Professor of Political Economy James Edwin Thorold Rogers, already known in America for his steadily selling edition of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, produced a well-researched account of the first nine years of the Bank of England⁶⁴, Gell found himself fending off Putnams, who had assured him that they could dispose of 200 copies with very little trouble⁶⁵. He was clearly tempted, and inclined to the view that 250 was a more realistic number. For all that, he felt duty bound to acknowledge Macmillan's "first claim upon the book", even at a lower wholesale price. In October of the following year he found himself coming under pressure from Harpers, who wanted to issue in the States the volume of George Birkbeck Hill's recent edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* devoted to the *Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides*. Johnsoniana were, then as now, popular in American academic circles, and the matter exercised Gell so much that he took the - for him - quite unusual step of journeying up to London to have a word with Frederick Macmillan about it⁶⁶.

What brought matters to a head was, predictably enough, the important question of copyright. By early 1891 the International Copyright Act, better known as the Chace Act, was wending its way through Congress and was due to come into effect on July 3, with results that nobody on either shore of the Atlantic could quite predict. Back in the Clarendon Building the Delegates had been inspecting its small print and were quick to appreciate the significance of the clause specifying that any new book, if it wished for protection in America, would need henceforth to be registered in Washington on the day before publication. The most influential among them, Benjamin Jowett, the second edition of whose *Dialogues of Plato* was about to appear, was not inclined to be philosophical about its chances in the pressured academic environment of the New World. He wanted action, and he wanted it now. If necessary he wanted a distinctive purpose-specific edition, printed in America on American paper, albeit to Oxford's specifications. With a sort of hounded weariness, Gell wrote to Macmillan on May 25:

The Master of Balliol is getting very anxious to arrange the American edition of his new issue of his Plato. It is largely altered, revised and added to and we expect it will make four volumes 8vo of about 600 pages each. I will send you an experimental copy in Crown 8vo we have set up as a guide to the American edition⁶⁷.

Re-setting the work would, it was calculated, cost between £1,000 and £1,500. The question seemed to be, was the advantage thus gained worth such an outlay? After several months of uncertainty, clarification was forthcoming: to secure the copyright, it was sufficient to register the imported sheets. By the following April these were on their way; the problem now became one of ensuring that the date of publication in Washington coincided as nearly possible with that in Britain. Jowett was as importunate as ever. Even so, Gell did not permit himself the luxury or convenience of communicating with Brett direct. As the increasingly

⁶³ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, May 20, 1886. BL Add.Ms. 54886, f. 95.

⁶⁴ *The First Nine Years of the Bank of England: An Enquiry into a weekly record of the price of bank stock from August 17, 1694 to September 17, 1703* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887).

⁶⁵ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, March 21, 1887. BL Add.Ms. 54886, f.103.

⁶⁶ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, October 8, 1888. BL Add. Ms. 54886, f.128

⁶⁷ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, 25 May 1891, BL Add. Ms 54886, ff. 142-3.

overworked Secretary writes yet again to Frederick Macmillan on 5th, one can sense his tension rising. This dependence on American schedules was growing irksome:

We understand from Mr Devinne that the sheets of 'Plato' will be in Mr Brett's hands almost immediately and we are anxious to fix the earliest possible day for the simultaneous publication in the two countries, our edition being ready, and many demands being made for its publication. We shall be glad if Mr Brett will accelerate matters by depositing the work according to the Act of Congress on the first day that Devinne can deliver him a complete set of sheets and then take his own time about the binding. Will you kindly instruct him in regard to this, so as to untie our hands at the earliest possible moment?

We shall stand ready to publish within six days notice at any day after May 2nd that Brett may appoint. Will you ask him to telegram if necessary in your cipher and at our expense?⁶⁸

Jowett's persistence may have provoked Telegrams and Anger, but this was far from being an isolated instance. So many Oxford authors were now raising questions of simultaneity and copyright as to bring the whole subject of the Press's arrangements for distribution in New York into the open. One can sense the general scepticism as to the wisdom of continuing with the current state of affairs in a letter written to Bedford Street that January by a slightly more relaxed Gell. He has clearly been chewing over with the Printer the embarrassments of this transatlantic commerce. Putting on his most diplomatic mask, he now asks in the most civil and complimentary manner whether Macmillan would like to re-negotiate terms. What he seems to mean is that the Delegates themselves are having second, or possible third, thoughts:

In talking over the matter with Mr Hart at the beginning of the New Year, I am very pleased with the evidence that he gives me of the steadily increasing business between your house and us, and I gather from him that it is his impression that this may grow to yet greater dimensions. It occurs to him to ask in view of the importance of such an increase both to yourselves and us, whether our terms of settlement are such as you desire them to be. Altho' we have no wish to interfere with any arrangements in other quarters which are working satisfactorily, yet we should like you to understand that after all these years of intimate relationship, there is no house with which we are more pleased to be associated, as printers, than with yours and we should be always pleased to hear from you if any modification of our customary arrangements would tend to develop our work for you⁶⁹.

Whatever the purpose of this disingenuous Twelfth Night missive, the year 1892 was likely to spell a crisis in the Press's transatlantic dispensation, and Gell well knew it. Already, with an eye to opportunities that were fast opening up, Oxford authors were proposing works

⁶⁸ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, April 5, 1892, BL Add Ms. 54886, f. 154.

⁶⁹ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, January 6, 1892, BL Add Ms. 54886, ff. 150-1.

specifically aimed at the American market. One such was Edward John Payne who by November was busy correcting the proofs of the second of the six volumes of his *History of the New World Called America*. Brett wrote to Macmillan asking whether he should think about securing American rights forthwith. Responding as usual via Bedford Street, and probably in the light of the subject matter, Gell proposed a reversal of the procedure adopted for Jowett's Plato. Brett should contact an American printer with a view to their setting the book in an identical format to the first volume already printed by the Clarendon Press, and send through specimen pages that could then be stereotyped in Oxford⁷⁰. This was going well beyond the terms of their usual collaboration: it was to admit Brett onto terms of virtual commercial partnership, and to place the initiative well and truly in his hands.

In reality, things were about to take a turn in the opposite direction. Frowde for one was growing increasingly tired of the frustrations involved in the Nelsons agency for the selling of Bibles and Prayer Books. As he edged towards setting up an independent agency of his own, a crisis was provoked in the learned press by a personage still more eminent than the recently deceased Benjamin Jowett: by Jowett's eighty-six-year-old friend, Gladstone. In the late summer of 1895, within eighteen months of the end of his fourth Liberal administration, the former Prime Minister proposed to the Press a two-volume collection of the *Works* of Bishop Joseph Butler, with a characteristically lengthy introductory essay by himself. The subject held no general appeal, but the identity of the editor alone would sell it, in America as well as in England. Gell was by now in a highly fraught state, and about to depart for a much-needed holiday in the South of France. He wrote Macmillan a terse letter in which he attempted to be fair to the meddlesome Gladstone, while none too subtly indicating to Macmillan - and through him to Brett - that their active collaboration with the Press was in effect a dead letter. Gell was in no mood to be diplomatic: the time for tact was past. On this occasion Oxford would, he curtly informed both of them, make its own independent arrangements to print the work in New York. He unceremoniously went on:

We shall not need to avail ourselves of Mr Brett's kind offices in regard to the printing, as Mr Frowde has now established an agency for Bibles and Prayer Books in New York, through which it will be possible for us to deal with such matters on the spot. I have, however, instructed his agent to communicate with Mr Brett concerning the typography of the book⁷¹.

Then, as if turning to the wall, he added the valetudinarian remark: 'I am feeling rather out of sorts, and shall be leaving England for some weeks shortly.' There was one additional sentence, as if to cover himself from any accusation of double-dealing, or else of moral cowardice in his dealings with America: 'Will you kindly let Mr Brett know the contents of this letter?'

Brett was stalwart enough not to feel crestfallen at this turn of events. He was in any case already looking to his own future. By 1890 he had already negotiated with the Board of Macmillan for their operation in America to be split into two, with himself as chairman of a semi-autonomous office in Bond Street, in which the British Board nonetheless retained a

⁷⁰ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, November 19, 1892. BL Add Ms 54886, f. 156.

⁷¹ Gell to Frederick Macmillan, November 25, 1895. BL Add Ms. 54886, f. 167.

majority holding. To settle the deal he set sail for England in March 1897, forwarding instructions to 29, Bedford Street that Gell should be informed in advance of his coming and sending a letter to the Delegates through him mulling over the increasing anomalies of his position. It is possible that, especially in the light of that communication, he was hoping to salvage something from the wreckage of the once-valued Oxford connection. In that case, he was to be disappointed. In the second week of April, Gell arranged for a meeting with him in Bedford Street and travelled up from Oxford by train to attend it. It was the first and only time the two men saw one another face to face, and the atmosphere can only have been strained. Afterwards, and again for the very first time, he wrote a personal letter to Brett. Two days later he sent a copy of it to Macmillan, with a covering note stating that the Delegates now considered it 'best for all parties concerned to terminate the arrangement for the sale of our books in the United States at the earliest possible moment'. The enclosure read:

Dear Mr Brett,

I have naturally given very careful consideration to the conversation which passed between us when I called upon you in Bedford Street; for, I could not but be impressed by your feeling, that the opening of our New York Branch with the ultimate prospect of the transfer of the Clarendon Press Books to it rendered your position a very difficult one. One has to consider not only the lack of motive which the present arrangement involves as regards the establishment of new publications entrusted to you but also the fact that the reputation both of the Delegates and of yourself is likely to suffer amongst our authors, if the American sale of their books appears to be unsuccessful in your hands. The more I considered the subject the more I was convinced that there was no alternative between the establishment of a new engagement for a term of years, and the prompt termination of the present state of things.

You are, I know, aware that it was not the original intention of the Delegates to precipitate the transfer of the Clarendon Press books to our New York Branch; but it is now clear that neither the Delegates nor yourselves are at all disposed to enter into a fresh agreement for a number of years. Under the circumstances I have asked the Board to give careful consideration to the whole matter before entering upon those proposals for modifications of terms etc. which you have submitted. The upshot is that the Delegates ask me to inform you that they consider it would be desirable to terminate the present arrangement at the earliest possible moment. When, about a year ago I was in correspondence with Macmillan on the subject, he did not ask us to give any long notice when our decision was ultimately taken; and the Delegates, therefore, ask me to suggest to you that the 1st of August next would probably be a convenient time for the transfer to take place⁷².

⁷² BL Add Ms. 54886. ff. 173-4. The meeting of the Delegates to which Gell's letter refers had taken place on Friday, April 9. Letters from Frowde and Hart had been read out in support of the new arrangement, and the proceeds from New York were added to the annual dividend. Item 4 (f. 309) ran: 'In the matter of the sales of Clarendon Press Books in America, various communications with Messrs Macmillan & Co. Ltd, Mr Brett and Mr Frowde were reported, indicating the necessity of a transfer of business to the New York Branch at an early date. It was resolved to propose to Messrs Macmillan & Co, the termination of the existing agreement on August 1st, but that, if they preferred longer notice, six months notice should be given them in accordance with the existing understanding.'

By the time the four-month term of notice had expired, Gell had retired as Secretary on the grounds of ill health, and the New York office of the Oxford University Press – the first of its proliferating overseas branches - was incorporated, and well and truly running.